

the debt limit to be increased without the minority party providing any of the votes needed to do so.

So if Republicans want to abscond from their responsibilities, not vote to pay the debt they incurred, so be it. That is a bad thing. It is a bad precedent. But this is the way out. It is a way out. It is a straightforward proposition: If Republicans really want to see the debt ceiling raised without providing a single vote, I am prepared to hold that vote. I can't imagine the Republican leader would object to his own request—his own request.

#### DEBT LIMIT

Now, taking a step back, Mr. President, we need to remember we didn't need to be in this position at all. We could have been well on our way to resolving these avoidable crises last night. The debt ceiling has been raised 80 times over the past 60 years under both Democratic and Republican Presidents, under both unified and divided government.

Ten years ago, Republican opposition to extending the debt ceiling was considered a fringe, a radical idea. The Republican Speaker at the time called the notion of holding the debt ceiling hostage to political ends "insanity."

The Republican leader himself 2 years ago said we needed to raise the debt ceiling because "America can't default," otherwise that would be a disaster. His words.

Well, after last night, it is clear "insanity" and "disaster" are now the Republican Party line, and it is endangering the very bedrock upon which both our economic viability and financial credibility stand.

I hope that our Republican colleagues can walk us back from the ledge in a few hours, but it is a sad state of affairs to see one of America's two major political parties so casually, so gleefully playing with the livelihoods of tens of millions of Americans, all for basically a cheap political goal.

Democrats, meanwhile, are not going to abscond from these core responsibilities. Keeping the government open and preventing default is vital to our country's future, and Democrats are going to make sure we do not lapse on either, in spite of the dangerous path Republicans have chosen to take us on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### BUDGET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am glad that the Democratic leader came to the floor after the Republican leader. He certainly clarified some of the statements that were made by Senator McConnell and brought a dose of reality into the picture. I listened carefully to Senator McConnell's speech, and I was waiting for one word. I knew he would say it at some point, and yet I don't think he did. I might have missed it, but I don't think he ever used the word "filibuster"—"filibuster," the requirement of 60 votes to proceed with the business of the Senate.

The reason why that is essential is the Democrats are prepared to accept the responsibility of funding the government and dealing with our national debt, acknowledging our debt ceiling. And if the Republicans don't care to be part of that conversation—or to engage in it, that is their wish—that is what they can have. But Senator McConnell has put in a filibuster, a requirement of 60 votes, which makes it literally impossible for the Democrats on their own to accept their responsibility. He didn't mention that the entire time.

I think we have reached a new low point in the U.S. Senate, where the Republican leader and his followers, to a person, are prepared to jeopardize the economy of the United States for purely political reasons. We know that this filibuster means we need Republican votes to move this measure. And he has made it quite clear that he won't give those votes, at least as of yesterday. I can only hope that Republican Senators going home, maybe this weekend, hearing from their constituents and businesses, will have second thoughts about this and accept that bipartisan responsibility that we all face.

There is a second you had to listen very carefully to catch with Senator McConnell's opening statement. He went on to say at great length that the last time we passed a debt ceiling extension was in August. And, he said, incidentally, all the spending leading up to August was covered by that debt ceiling. Well, that may have been true. What did he fail to tell us? There was another bill that he voted for, Trump supported, the Republicans supported, and the Democrats voted for, too, in December for \$900 billion in spending. That wasn't covered by the earlier August debt ceiling. He knows that. So to say all the debt of the Trump administration has been taken care of just isn't the fact. And I am glad we have a chance to clarify that.

He seems to think that we are going to "hurt families and help China" if we press forward with the reconciliation bill. Does it hurt families to find an affordable way to have quality daycare for their kids? I don't think so. Does it hurt families when children get a chance for pre-K education so they are ready for school when the day comes? Does it hurt families when we extend education from K-12 to K-14 and say to our community colleges, We are going to give you a mission: Prepare the workforce for the 21st century? Give these Americans the skills they need for a good paycheck and a home and a family and a future.

According to the Senator from Kentucky, that hurts American families. I think he is just flatout wrong. It helps them in critical ways. It really addresses expenses and challenges they face and need a helping hand to succeed.

And in terms of helping China, a competitive American workforce, investment in research and innovation does not help China. If we invest in this

country, in its people and its ideas, we have always succeeded and led the world.

So I disagree with the Senator from Kentucky completely. His approach—tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, corporations that, frankly, can escape any tax liability—hasn't worked. And it won't work. It is fundamentally unfair, and it fails to invest in the people that need it the most: working families, middle-income families, children and their future.

(Mr. PADILLA assumed the Chair.)

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, coincidentally, last Friday, you and I made a trip to Chicago.

Senator PADILLA, as chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee of Judiciary, joined me in visiting one of the most amazing neighborhoods in the city. We spent the day in Little Village, a neighborhood in the southwest part of the city known as the "Mexican Capital of the Midwest."

During our visit, we walked down 26th Street, the commercial heart of Little Village. It is lined with more than 100 family-owned shops and restaurants. People travel from all over the country to try their homemade tamales, stop for their quinceañera dresses, and experience a little slice of Mexico right here in America.

Families who own the businesses on 26th Street are proof that the American dream is alive and well.

Remember La Chiquita Grocery? I think that the founder—I guess it was almost 35 years ago—took the venture of opening a grocery store and now has seven or eight of them in the region. And they are so proud of their anchor store that we were guests in, to show us all the things available to folks in the neighborhood.

Whether these folks arrived in our country a few years ago or a few generations ago, these families contribute to the economic vitality of the city of Chicago every day. Little Village, that we visited, is a major economic engine in Chicago. That 2-mile stretch of 26th Street is the second highest grossing shopping district in all of Chicago. And those family-run businesses generate nearly \$1 billion in sales each year.

Bilingual communities like Little Village make America richer and stronger, culturally and economically. They are living proof that immigrants are still an essential part of America's future. And there are millions of people who have been contributing to our economy and our communities for years. But they have been left behind by our broken immigration system.

That is exactly what the Presiding Officer and I, along with many of our colleagues in the Democratic caucus—that is exactly what we are trying to include as an immigration reform in the Build Back Better package that will come before the Senate in the coming days.

Let me tell you about one of these immigrants that we are focused on.